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Colby Optimistic on CIA Probes Effect

By Daniel F. Gilmore

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CIA Director William E. Colby, whose agency is under investigation by two congressional committees and a presidential commission, said yesterday the CIA "will come through" the probes and he has no intention of resigning. "I am not having the authority. I have a commitment to the Senate of the United States that I will refuse, if it is a threat to our freedom and a danger to the republic, to really go get another job. I gaged in uncontrolled activities," Colby said.

Although he admitted the agency committed some improprieties, Colby denied before Senate and House committees last month that the CIA had conducted a "massive illegal domestic intelligent operation" against antiwar and dissident elements in recent years. "I think the investigations will rather clearly indicate that the CIA has adhered essentially to its foreign intelligence mission and its activities were controlled and within the limits of its proper authority and proper approvals at various times, with a few exceptions—few and far between—an things that now appear questionable or even in some very few cases flatly wrong."

He said the agency had done some counterspying to determine whether American dissidents had links with foreign powers, but said the operation was "neither massive, illegal, nor domestic."

The nub of current controversy over CIA activities is that its charter forbids it from spying on Americans within the United States. "I think the pleasure of the President, so it's not up to me alone. But I certainly don't have any temptation to throw in the towel myself."

Asked if he would refuse a presidential order to carry out an operation he thought improper, Colby said:

All this will "come into proportion," he said, "and will be weighed against an enormous improvement in our intelligence knowledge of the world and the enormous contribution that CIA makes to the security of our country, to the welfare of our citizens, to peace in many parts of the world."

Colby, 55, an intelligence official since World War II and CIA chief since 1967, said the agency's character and nature has changed in the last 15 or 20 years.

"It is not the same thing as the old image. It's an intellectual process. A technical process."

"Yes, it still has its more venturesome aspects. But the excitement of intelligence these days is in the intellectual and technological as well as physical fields. It isn't just the old Mata Hari and Nathan Hale days. It's a big affair now."